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SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

NEIL GAIMAN
MARC HEMPEL

THE SANDMAN

THE KINDLY ONES

DIRECT SALES

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I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD EVER GET TO THIS PLACE.

DESTINATIONS ARE OFTEN A SURPRISE TO THE DESTINED.

YOU ***SURE*** THIS IS THE PLACE YOU ARE GOING? A NICE LADY LIKE YOU?

YES, THANK YOU. PLEASE WAIT HERE UNTIL I RETURN. I'LL PAY YOU FOR THE WAITING TIME.

NOT A PLACE *I* PLAN TO HANG AROUND, I AM AFRAID.

NOT A GOOD PLACE. ON A BETTER NIGHT I WOULD NOT HAVE ***COME*** HERE. DO YOU ***KNOW*** HOW MANY TAXI-DRIVERS BEEN ***KILLED*** IN ***LA*** THIS YEAR?

SEE ***THIS?*** IT'S A HUNDRED DOLLAR BILL. I'M GIVING YOU HALF OF IT. *IF* YOU'RE STILL HERE WHEN I GET BACK, I SHALL GIVE YOU THE OTHER HALF.

OKAY, LADY. I SHALL BE HERE, UNLESS THERE BE ***GUNS.*** IF THERE BE GUNS, I WILL BE GONE.

EXCUSE ME... I'M LOOKING FOR A *WOMAN*.

YOU SEE, BY THE MOTEL DOOR OVER THERE? THAT'S ANNIE. SHE'S CHEAP AND PRETTY CLEAN, AND SHE'S GOT A BAD HABIT TO FEED, SO SHE'S NOT EVEN THAT PARTICULAR.

I'M LOOKING FOR A PARTICULAR WOMAN. SHE'S GOT BLONDE HAIR. QUITE THIN. I BELIEVE SHE'S VERY *STRONG*.

HER? *JEEZ*. SHE'S ASLEEP OVER BY THE WALL.

JERRY TRIED TO COP A FEEL. SHE NEARLY BROKE HIS JAW. *BAM*-- JUST KNOCKED HIM DOWN, WENT BACK TO SLEEP.

HEY. BITCH WUZ ASLEEP. WHUZZA FUGGEN *PROB*LEM, HUH? *I* DIN' HURT HER. BITCH NEAR *KILLED* ME.

WHERE IS SHE NOW?

STILL THERE. BY TH' WALL. AIN'T NOBODY GON' BOTHER HER. SOME DAYS A MAN CAN'T WIN FOR LOSIN'.

HIPPOLYTA? HELLO? CAN YOU *HEAR* ME? I'M CALLED LARISSA.

YOU HAVE TO COME WITH ME, NOW.

OH YES... WHITE BIRD... LITTLE WHITE BIRD...

LITTLE BIRD. I SHALL FOLLOW YOU.

TAKE ME TO THE LADIES. TO THE KIND AND GENTLE LADIES.

WHAT DID SHE JUST SAY?

I DON'T KNOW. SHE'S A BIT MIXED-UP RIGHT NOW. JUST HELP ME GET HER IN THE CAR.

HERE'S THE REST OF YOUR HUNDRED.

GREAT. THE WAY YOUR FRIEND STINKS, IT WILL COST ME THAT TO CLEAN MY TAXI.

NONSENSE. NOW, THE CORNER OF SWEETZER AND MELROSE.

YOU GOT ANY IDEAS WHAT THAT WUZ ALL ABOUT?

MOTEL

COLOR TV

UH-HUH. I THINK THE ONE WHO BROKE JERRY'S FACE, SHE WAS LIKE, A ROBOT SPACE ALIEN.

AN' THE OTHER ONE, SHE WAS MEBBE FBI OR SOMEP'N.

AN' THAT TAXI WASN'T NO TAXI. IT WAS A CAMOUFLAGED GUV'MINT SPACE-SHIP.

YOU BELIEVE ANY A' THAT SHIT COMIN' OUTTA YOUR MOUTH?

HELL, NO.

THE KINDLY ONES VII

WRITTEN BY
NEIL GAIMAN

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ASSOCIATED BY:
SHELLY ROEBERG

SANDMAN CHARACTERS CREATED BY: GAIMAN, KIETH & DRINGENBERG

TELL YOUR MASTER, THE DREAM-WEAVER, THAT THERE IS ONE HERE TO TALK WITH HIM.

TELL HIM TO COME OUT OF HIS HALL, AND TALK TO ME.

AND WHO ARE YOU, THEN, TO DEMAND ENTRY?

I DO *NOT* DEMAND ENTRY. I DO NOT *ENTER* THE HOUSES OF MY ENEMIES. I DEMAND ONLY THAT YOUR MASTER COME OUT AND TALK.

AS FOR WHO I AM?

I AM CALLED GRIM, THE DEATH-BLINDER, THE HIGH ONE, THE GALLOWS-GOD.

I AM CALLED GONDLIR THE WAND-BEARER, AND I AM GRIMNIR THE HOODED ONE, THE TERRIBLE, THE WAKEFUL. YOU KNOW ME: I AM ODIN, BOR'S SON.

AND YOUR MASTER HAS DONE ME A GREAT WRONG.

KOFF HRRACK

KOFF

HHROUGCHH!

Greetings, Lord Odin.

You are welcome here.

AYE, GREETINGS, DREAM-WEAVER, HEARTH'S-BETRAYER. I COUNTED YOU AS FRIEND ONCE, BUT CAN COUNT YOU SO NO MORE.

I SHALL STATE MY GRIEVANCE. LISTEN: THE AESIR BOUND MY BLOOD-BROTHER LOKI, LONG AGO. BOUND HIM WITH THE ENTRAILS OF HIS SON, BOUND HIM FAR BENEATH THE EARTH.

"WISE SKADI SET A SNAKE ABOVE HIS HEAD TO DRIP ITS BURNING POISON INTO LOKI'S FACE, THAT HE COULD NEITHER THINK NOR TALK HIS WAY OUT OF HIS PRISON.

"HE WAS TOO CLEVER, TOO WILY, TOO MALEVOLENT TO BE FREE."

STILL, AS YOU KNOW, I FREED HIM, SOME YEARS AGO, FOR BUT A SHORT TIME...

I HAD *THOUGHT* THAT I HAD RETURNED LOKI TO HIS PLACE BENEATH THE WORLD; BUT I WAS *WRONG*. IT IS MERELY A DREAM-THING THAT SCREAMS AND CURSES; A WISP, A FIGMENT, THAT WRITHES IN PAIN.

LOKI IS FREE IN THE WORLD ONCE MORE. HE MUST HAVE BEEN FREE FOR SOME *YEARS* NOW.

AHHH...

THIS IS *YOUR* DOING, WEAVER, IS IT NOT?

Yes. I am afraid that it is.

He had already escaped you, and had bound another beneath the earth, when I discovered him. I freed that other, and placed a dream there in its place.

WHAT DID YOU *WANT*, EH? A FAVOR FROM LOKI? TO PLACE HIM IN YOUR DEBT? TO USE HIM AS YOUR AGENT, IN SOME HUMAN DEAL OR OTHER?

Something like that.

YOU'RE A *FOOL*, WEAVER. LOKI HAS NO SENSE OF GRATITUDE. IT BURNS AND GALLS AND ACHES HIM TO BE BEHOLDEN.

HE IS A SERPENT, WHO MUST BITE YOUR HAND EVEN AS YOU SAVE HIM FROM A HUNTER.

LOKI CANNOT HELP STRIKING THE HAND THAT AIDS HIM, STRIKING WITH MALICE AND SLOW POISON. THAT IS WHAT HE *IS*. THAT IS WHAT HE *DOES*.

I HAVE HEARD STRANGE RUMORS ABOUT YOU, DREAM-WEAVER. HUGINN AND MUNINN TELL ME WHAT THEY SEE AND HEAR, AS THEY TRAVEL THE MIDDLE WORLD.

THEY ALSO SAY THE RAVEN HOST WILL BE COMING TO THE DREAMING, SOON ENOUGH. RAVENS *KNOW* THESE THINGS, IT SEEMS.

I hear rumors too, Odin One-eye. But only a fool listens to rumors.

ONLY A FOOL *IGNORES* THEM.

YOU *PUZZLE* ME, DREAM-WEAVER.

ARE YOU A SPIDER, WHO'S SPUN A WEB OF CUNNING AND DECEIT AND NOW WAITS PATIENTLY FOR HIS PREY TO COME TO HIM; OR ARE YOU A DEER, FROZEN BY THE LIGHT OF A HUNTER'S FLAME, AS DISASTER COMES TOWARD YOU?

You have known me for some time, old god. Which would you say I am?

YOU'RE A DEEP ONE. BUT *HOW* DEEP? WHAT'S ILLUSION? *THAT'S* THE QUESTION... AND THIS IS A BAD PLACE TO TALK OF ILLUSION...

AHH. KOFF... KHAKOFF!

IN TRUTH, THERE'S NO *REAL* ENMITY BETWEEN US. WERE I TO DECLARE A BLOOD-FEUD WITH EVERY BEING EVER FOOLED BY LOKI, I COULD BEGIN BY KILLING MYSELF...

...AND CONTINUE THE SLAUGHTER UNTIL THERE WERE NEITHER GOD NOR DWARF NOR GIANT LEFT.

IT IS, AFTER ALL, WHAT HE *DOES*.

BUT I *AM* DISAPPOINTED. SOMEHOW, I EXPECTED *MORE* FROM YOU, DREAM-WEAVER.

And, for my part, I am sorry to have disappointed you, Odin Battle-king.

SO. UM.

WELL, THERE WAS THIS DOGGY. HE WAS A VERY CLEVER DOGGY. HE SAID THINGS LIKE... LIKE...

"I WOULD FEEL INFINITELY MORE COMFORTABLE IN YOUR PRESENCE IF YOU WOULD AGREE TO TREAT GRAVITY AS A LAW, RATHER THAN ONE OF A NUMBER OF SUGGESTED OPTIONS."

HE SAID THAT. I ONLY REMEMBERED IT. IN MY HEAD.

AND I PROMISED OUR BROTHER I'D LOOK AFTER HIM NOT TO MENTION THE OTHER WAY AROUND.

ONLY. THEN WHEN IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT I WAS BEING ALL FISHIES, AND I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO START, AND I LOOKED ALL UP AND DOWN AND THROUGH AND ROUND MY REALM AND EVEN IN THE PIGPOND, BUT HE WASN'T ANYWHERE.

SO I THOUGHT, I SHOULD HAVE ANOTHER QUEST TO FIND HIM. LAST TIME I HAD A QUEST TO FIND SOMEONE I DID REALLY WELL. AND YOU TOLD US WHERE TO GO, IN THE END. AND YOU WERE RIGHT, TOO.

...I THOUGHT... I SHOULD ASK YOU FIRST.

THAT'S RIGHT, ISN'T IT?

I MEAN, IT IS... I THINK. EXCEPT FOR THE BIT ABOUT THE PIGPOND. I MADE THAT UP.

UM. THE LAST TIME I SAW YOU I GOT KIND OF MAD AT YOU, BUT I FIGURED THAT IF I DIDN'T MENTION IT YOU'D PROBABLY HAVE FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT IT BY NOW, LIKE I HAVE. SO THAT'S OKAY.

I BEAR NO GRUDGES. I SEE THINGS AS THEY ARE: HOW THEN CAN I BEAR A GRUDGE?

BUT... MY SISTER. YOU MUST UNDERSTAND: EVENTS DO NOT OCCUR APART AND SINGLY. AND ANYTHING WORTH THE HUNTING HAS A COST.

IF I DON'T FIND THE DOGGY HE'LL BE SAAAD. HE'S PROBABLY GOING "I SHOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN MY EYES OFF HER AT THE IT'S A SMALL WORLD AFTER ALL PLACE BOAT RIDE" EVEN RIGHT NOW.

AND I MUST HUG HIM TIGHTLY AS ANYTHING, AND I MUST SAY SORRY, AND TELL HIM I WON'T EVER LEAVE HIM EVER EVER AGAIN.

MY SISTER. YOU HAVE COME TO ME FOR ADVICE. AND I CAN GIVE YOU ADVICE: IF YOU LOOK FOR YOUR DOG, YOU SHALL FIND IT. BUT IF YOU FIND YOUR DOG, YOU SHALL FIND OTHER THINGS, ALSO. THE CHOICE IS YOURS.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?

LOOK AT DREAM.

WHY DOES HE LOOK LIKE THAT? SHOULD I GO TO HIM?

SHOULD I TRY TO CHEER HIM UP?

I COULD MAKE HIM HAPPY, I THINK. I COULD SING HIM A LITTLE SONG.

THE CHOICE IS YOURS, AS I SAID. BUT I WOULD STRONGLY SUGGEST THAT YOU LET HIM COPE WITH HIS PROBLEMS ON HIS OWN.

THE CHOICE, AS I SAID, IS YOURS. BUT YOUR AID COULD NOT HURT HIM, AND IT MIGHT CONCEIVABLY HELP.

HURRAY, HURRAY! THAT WAS SO WONDROUS!

HOW DID YOU DO THAT? CAN YOU SHOW ME HOW TO DO THAT? I CAN ONLY EVER SAY ONE THING AT ONCE.

HELLO?

HELLO?

BUT DESTINY HAS GONE. AND, EVENTUALLY, FINDING NO FURTHER ANSWERS TO HER QUESTIONS, HIS SISTER PICKS A PATH FOR HERSELF, AND WALKS IT, AND LEAVES THAT PLACE.

TAXI

THERE WE GO, HIPPOLYTA. IN HERE...

YOU'D BETTER STAY ON THE BED.

I'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE UP A BED FOR MYSELF IN THE BATHTUB. TCH.

WELL, I'VE FOUND YOU. THEY CAME THROUGH ON THAT MUCH.

I WONDER WHERE YOU ARE...

I CAN FEEL YOU, FAR AWAY.

CAN YOU FEEL ME?

WELL, IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU CAN OR NOT, REALLY, DOES IT?

NOW. YOU NEED PROTECTION.

DILL FRONDS AND LAUREL LEAVES AND ROSE PETALS, CRUSHED IN A HONEY BASE. IT'S A BIT STICKY, AND IT'S VERY SIMPLE, BUT IT *WILL* TAKE CARE OF YOU, TO START OFF WITH.

LET'S SMEAR IT ON. *THEEERE* WE GO.

WELL, *THAT* WILL HOLD YOU AGAINST ***MOST*** OF THE THINGS YOU'RE LIKELY TO RUN INTO.

NOW WE JUST HAVE TO LOOK AFTER YOU *HERE*, IN CASE ANY-ONE COMES CALLING...

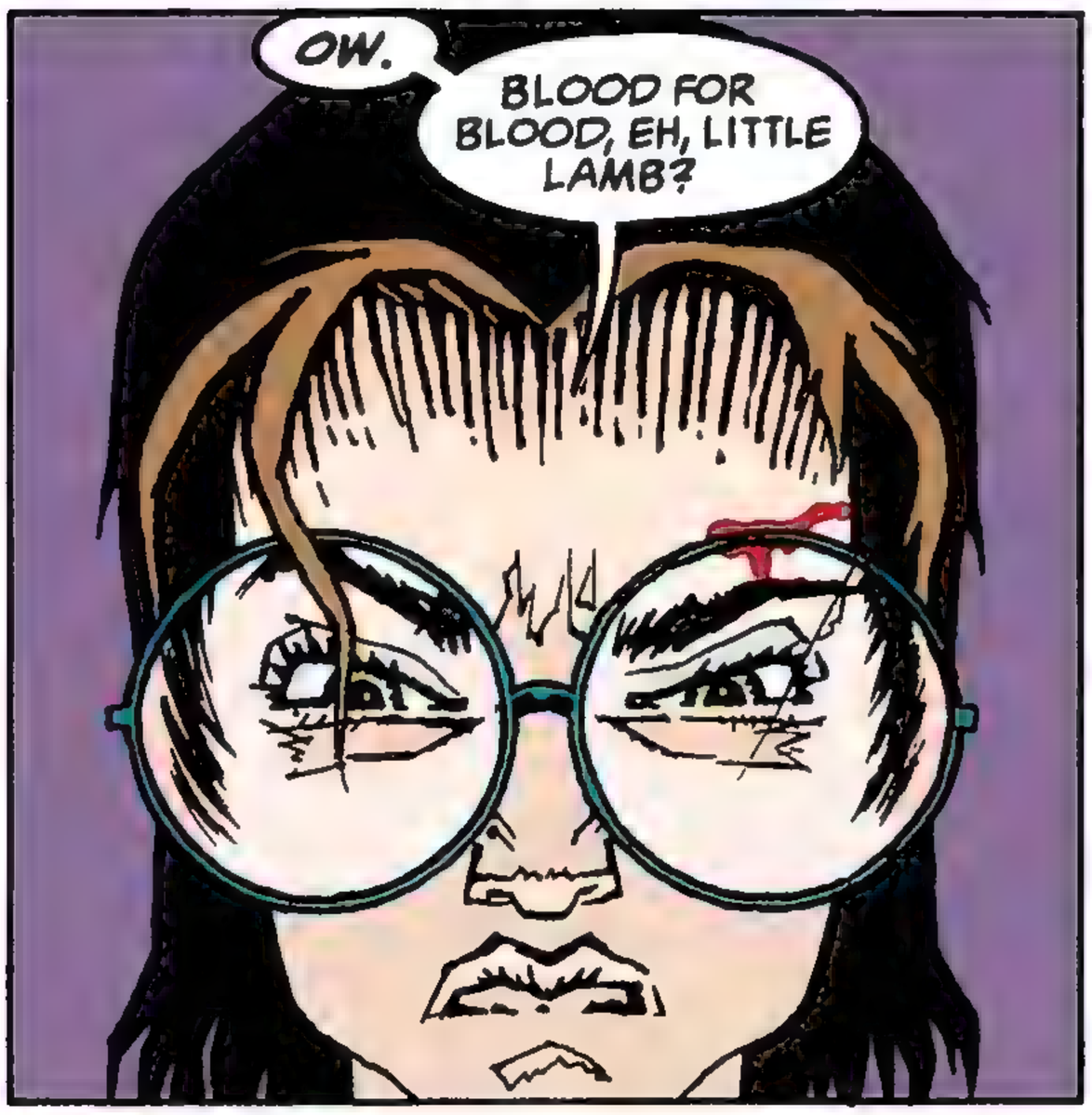
COME ON... *OUT* WE GO...

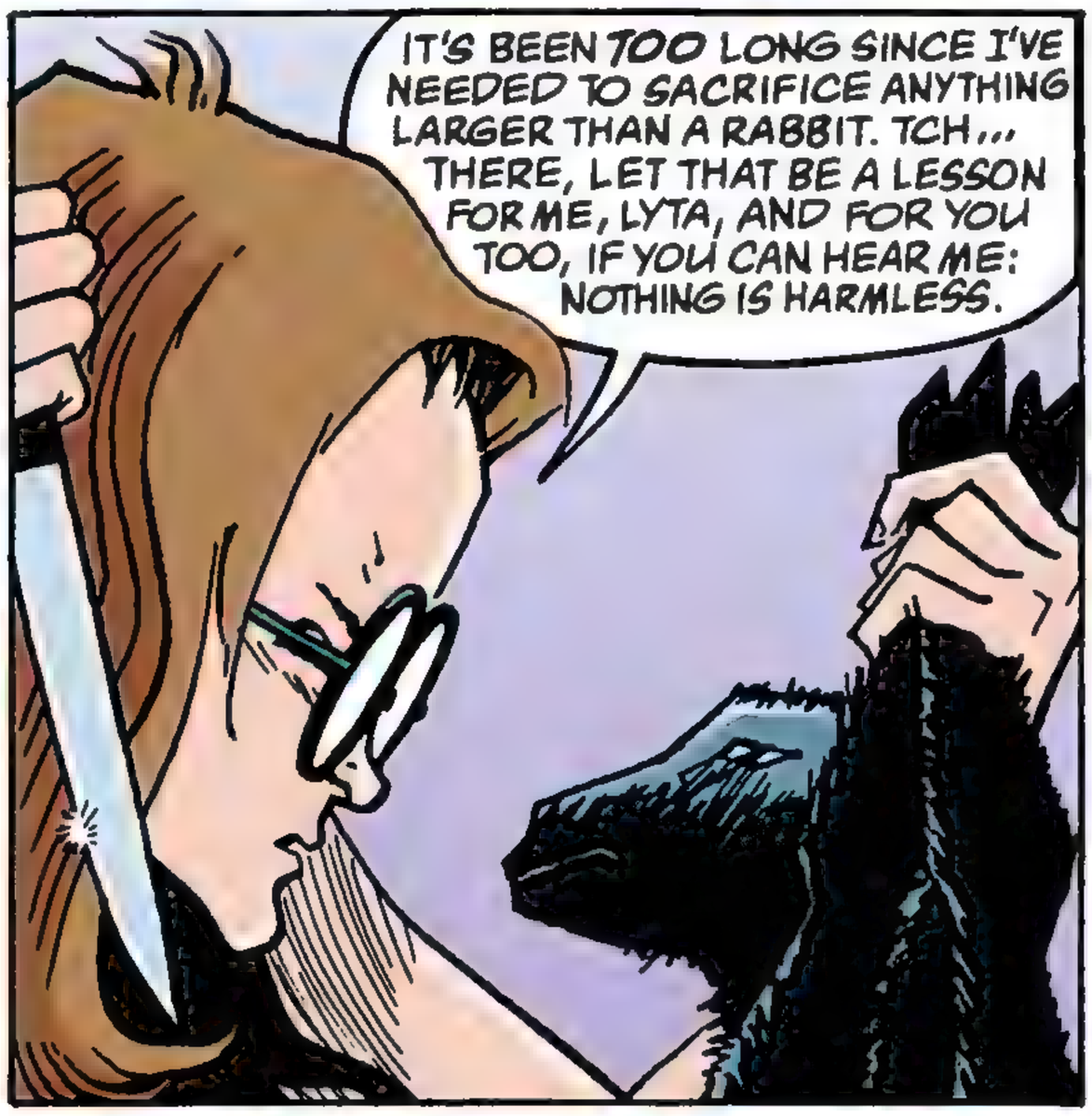
DO YOU ***KNOW*** HOW HARD IT IS TO FIND A BLACK LAMB IN WEST HOLLYWOOD?

I HAD TO ORDER *THIS* ONE FROM AN EXOTIC PET SHOP.

SHE'S GOING TO BE YOUR GUARDIAN.

MMMM!!


OW.
BLOOD FOR BLOOD, EH, LITTLE LAMB?


IT'S BEEN TOO LONG SINCE I'VE NEEDED TO SACRIFICE ANYTHING LARGER THAN A RABBIT. TCH... THERE, LET THAT BE A LESSON FOR ME, LYTA, AND FOR YOU TOO, IF YOU CAN HEAR ME: NOTHING IS HARMLESS.

NOTHING IS TOO CUTE AND SWEET TO BE DANGEROUS.
NOTHING IS SAFE.

CHK

IF THERE ARE HUNGRY SHADES ABOUT ME, LET THEM WAIT AND STARE UNFED.

IF LONELY AGING GODS THERE BE HERE, LET THEM LOOK ELSEWHERE FOR FOOD.

AEMINAEROTHERRETHORABEANIMEA, PTOUMOU LALAPSA, PHORBEA NEREATO BRIMO...

I CONSECRATE THIS CIRCLE TO HER WHO WAITS BENEATH THE EARTH, AND TO HER WHO MAKES LIFE ON THE EARTH, AND TO HER WHO SHINES COLDLY ABOVE THE EARTH.

I DEMAND THEIR PROTECTION FOR THE WOMAN WITHIN.

THERE.

THERE. I'VE DONE ALL I CAN, FOR NOW. TRIVIA OF THE CROSSWAYS ATTEND THEE ON THY TRAVELS, GIRL.

SO... IT'S WASH OFF THE BLOOD AND SLEEP ON THE FLOOR, OR SKIP THE BATH AND SLEEP IN THE TUB. CHOICES... ALWAYS CHOICES...

Richard Dadd

THE LATE

HER TOES SEARCH FOR CREVICES AND HOLLOWS. HER FINGERS BRAZENLY FORCE THEIR WAY INTO THE TINIEST FINGERHOLDS.

DESCENDING IS ALWAYS HARDER THAN ASCENDING, AND THIS DESCENT IS THE HARDEST LYTA HAS MADE.

TERROR EXISTS; THE KNOWLEDGE OF HOW EASY IT WOULD BE TO TUMBLE OFF AND AWAY INTO THE DARKNESS.

ALL JOURNEYS LEAVE MARKS ON US.

HER CLOTHES TEAR. HER SKIN IS GRAZED. MUSCLES ACHE AND BURN.

THE FALL, SHE KNOWS WITH A DARK CERTAINTY, WILL KILL HER.

SO SHE INCHES DOWNWARD, A MOMENT AT A TIME, BRUISED AND SKINNED AND SCARED.

I'M SO TIRED.

THEN STOP.

HUH?

WELL, LOOK AT YOURSELF. YOU'RE CRAZY. YOU'RE WEIRD. YOU'RE HORRIBLE.

I WASN'T GOING TO GROW UP TO BE YOU. I WAS GOING TO BE SOMEONE ELSE.

MAYBE WHEN I GROW UP I'LL BE A PRINCESS, OR A DANCER, OR A MOVIE STAR.

NOT A CRAZY WOMAN.

I'M NOT CRAZY.

OF COURSE I'M NOT CRAZY. I'M ONE OF THE GOOD GUYS.

I AM THE FURY. MY FEET ARE FIRMLY PLANTED ON THE GROUND. THIS IS PROBABLY JUST SOME SUPER-VILLAIN'S MIND-CONTROL-RAY EXPERIMENT...

RESIST, LYTA! RESIST!

"YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO THROUGH WITH THIS. YOU CAN OPEN YOUR EYES, CLIMB OFF THIS BED, WALK OUT THE DOOR, PUT YOUR LIFE BACK TOGETHER AGAIN.

"THERE'S ALWAYS THE CHOICE."

NOT ALWAYS.

SOMETIMES THERE JUST AREN'T ANY CHOICES AT ALL...

HELLO?

AT LAST, MY SISTER.

THERE, MY POSSET. WE'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU.

HMMPH. IT TOOK HER LONG ENOUGH TO GET HERE.

WE SAID WE'D SEE YOU AGAIN...

AH. IT'S YOU. I THOUGHT I'D SEE YOU HERE, EVENTUALLY.

Mm. How perceptive of you.

NOW, THAT'S UNWORTHY OF YOU.

Perhaps it is.

You know... you are the second person today to express their disappointment with me.

Do you mean that, Gilbert?

Am I really that disappointing?

THERE, WELL AND YOU'RE *HERE* NOW. YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY.

COME IN. SIT DOWN. MAKE YOURSELF NICE AND COMFORTABLE.

WE'LL MAKE YOU A HOT CUP OF TEA. ARE YOU HUNGRY?

I... YES. A LITTLE.

A FORTUNE COOKIE.

READ IT FIRST. THEN EAT THE COOKIE.

"LET ALL THAT DO ILL TAKE THIS PRECEDENT: *'MAN MAY HIS FATE FORESEE, BUT NOT PREVENT.'* AND OF ALL AXIOMS THIS SHALL WIN THE PRIZE, *'TIS BETTER TO BE FORTUNATE THAN WISE'.*"

NOW, *ISN'T* THAT HELPFUL?

DISAPPOINTING? HOOM... I'M NOT SURE I WOULD HAVE PUT IT THAT WAY MYSELF. NOT EXACTLY...

BUT I...AM... CONCERNED FOR YOU, MY LORD. FOR ALL OF US.

THE SKIES OF THE DREAMING ARE GRAY AND MOURNFUL, EVEN HERE, IN ME.

LOOK ABOUT YOU: THIS IS FIDDLER'S GREEN, WHERE SORROW AND CARE ARE UNKNOWN. BUT WHAT LITTLE SUN WE GET NOW IS STRETCHED AND TIRED.

EVER SINCE YOUR SON'S LAST DEATH--

Enough. This conversation has gone far enough.

I am attending to my responsibilities.

AND I ATTEND TO MY VISITORS. I LIKE THEM. I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM-- FOR THE SAILORS AND THE CENTAURS AND THE CHILDREN AND THE DREAMERS...

BUT WHEN, SOME TIME AGO, IT BECAME TOO MUCH FOR ME, I STOLE THE IDEA OF THIS BODY, AND WALKED INTO THE WAKING WORLD.

Yes. You did. But because you returned of your own will, you were not punished.

HOOM.

I'M NOT ENTIRELY SURE WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THE SAME THING, HERE.

I have my responsibilities.

ARE YOU...

ARE YOU THE FURIES?

ARE WE THE FURIES?

ARE YOU A HAND? OR AN EYE? OR A TOOTH?

NO, OF COURSE NOT. I AM MYSELF. BUT I HAVE THOSE THINGS WITHIN ME...

THERE YOU GO, THEN, MY LITTLE SCORPION-FLAIL...

There is a heath upon which cold winds blow.

There is a house upon that heath, built of dead rock and dry bone, in which one woman lives, or three, or none.

She is sustained, or they are, by the stream of blood that runs beside the house. Once it was a river, but that was many years ago.

A raven walks slowly about her house, its frock-coated gait that of an elderly gentleman, leaning forward as it struts.

A black hound waits by the door.

In the garden by the stream a little girl plays with something yellowed and round that might, conceivably, be a ball.

The smell of cordite drifts on the air here; fragments of shrapnel and bone glint in the red earth.

There will always be sacrifices to the Morrigan, the lady of war...

Ravens are solitary birds: they do not flock; they travel apart.

The bird looks up.

It pushes itself up into the harsh gray sky with beats of its huge wings; and it rides the cold wind, far away from the house on the heath.

I have come a very long way. Further than I've ever gone before.

I am seeking the Furies.

Not the Furies, my Lobelia. That's such a *nasty* name. It's one of the things they *call* ***women***, to put us in our *place*...

Termagant.

Shrew.

Vixen.

Virago.

Witch.

Bitch.

Do we *look* furious to you?

No. You look very kind. Very wise. Very gentle.

WELL, SO *THIS* IS WHERE THEY LIVE, EH?

YES. AARRKK...

WHAT DO WE DO IF ANYONE *FINDS* US HERE? MAYBE WE NEED SOME KIND OF COVER STORY.

YEAH? TELL 'EM WE'RE COPS.

SO WHAT AM I? *UNDERCOVER*? GIVE ME A *BREAK*...

YOU CAN JUST *CAW* AND FLY AWAY. OR NOT, AS YOU WILL. ANYWAY, WHO *CARES*? IF THEY'RE A *PROBLEM*, I CAN ALWAYS *KILL* THEM.

WILL YOU LAY OFF THAT KINDA TALK?

OKAY. OKAY. NO PROBLEM. IF YOU FEEL *THAT* STRONGLY, *YOU* CAN KILL THEM.

HMM... ODD... LOCKS'RE BUSTED...

DOESN'T SMELL LIKE THERE'S BEEN ANYONE AROUND FOR DAYS.

I CAN'T SMELL THE KID AT ALL...

HE'S DEFINITELY NOT HERE. WHAT DO WE DO *NOW*?

YOU'RE ASKING *ME*? FOR *ADVICE*? *COOOL*. YOU'RE *LEARNING*, BIRDIE.

LISTEN, CREEP...

UH.

BRRRRRR.

S'MATTER?

THIS WEIRD FEELING: LIKE SOMEONE JUST DANCED ON MY GRAVE.

I... I HAVE TO GO *HOME*.

UH *UH*. YOU'RE STAYING WITH ME UNTIL WE FIND THE BOY. THE *BOSS* SAID.

BUT--

YOU'RE MY *PARTNER*, LIKE IT OR NOT. WALK OUT ON ME *NOW*, BIRD, AND I *WRING* YOUR SCRAWNY NECK.

THERE, AND *THAT'S* A GOOD GIRL, WITH A PLEASANT TONGUE IN HER HEAD.

WE DO WHAT WE *HAVE* TO DO. THAT'S THE MOST ANYONE *CAN* DO.

WE DON'T *BOTHER* ANYONE. WE *HATE* TO BE A BOTHER. NOT UNLESS THERE'S A GOOD *REASON* TO BOTHER SOMEBODY.

THERE'S A... *MAN*.

I WANT TO DO *MORE* THAN BOTHER HIM. I WANT TO *DESTROY* HIM.

A MAKESHIFT BARGE MADE OF DEAD FLESH IS SLOWLY POLED DOWN A RIVER OF COLD SEMEN.

ASSARACUS THE UNSEEMLY SHOVES MAILURE, ITS THROAT-SISTER, AND POINTS UPWARD.

FOUR RAVENS ARE FLYING RAGGEDLY, BLACKLY, ACROSS THE BITTER RED SKY OF HELL.

MAILURE OPENS HER WINGS AND SPEEDS UPWARD, TRAILING FLESH, HER WET MOUTHS OPEN AS WIDE AS THEY CAN GO.

THE RAVENS BEAT THEIR BLACK WINGS HARD AGAINST THE SKY, AND FLY FASTER.

IN ENGLAND A WOMAN WHO LOOKS YOUNGER THAN HER TRUE AGE WRITES A LETTER, AND HALF LISTENS TO THE NEWS ON HER HOTEL ROOM TV.

THE THIRD ITEM OF NEWS IS THAT THE RAVENS HAVE LEFT THE TOWER OF LONDON. THE RAVENS' WINGS HAVING BEEN CLIPPED TO PREVENT THEIR FLYING AWAY, IT IS ASSUMED THEY HAVE BEEN STOLEN.

?

THE GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN ANNOUNCES THAT THEY WILL NOT SUBMIT TO TERRORISTS, AND SAYS THEY HAVE ORDERED A DOZEN RAVEN CHICKS FROM ZOOS AROUND THE COUNTRY. THEY FEAR DAMAGE TO THE TOURIST TRADE.

THE REPORTER ASKS ABOUT THE KINGDOM FALLING, AND IS ASSURED THAT, IN THIS DAY AND AGE, ONE MUST TAKE SUCH SUPERSTITIONS WITH A GRAIN OR TWO OF SALT.

EVERYBODY LAUGHS.

WHY?

HE KILLED MY SON. HE *STOLE* AND *KILLED* MY *SON*. HE KILLED MY HUSBAND, TOO. ISN'T *THAT* REASON ENOUGH?

NO, DEARIE. IT'S NOT.

YOU SEE, MY GOSLING, THE LADIES YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT CAN REALLY ONLY AVENGE *BLOOD*-DEBTS.

THAT'S ONE OF THE *RULES*.

IT'S THE *OLDEST* RULE.

BUT HE KILLED MY SON. THAT'S A BLOOD DEBT.

EHHH... YOUR BLOOD NOT HIS.

EVEN IF HE HAD KILLED YOUR SON, WE COULD DO NOTHING ABOUT IT.

HAD HE KILLED HIS OWN SON, THEN IT WOULD BE DIFFERENT.

THEN-- IF WE WISHED--WE COULD HOUND HIM; WE COULD DESTROY HIS LIFE AND HIS WORLD, HOUND HIM TO THE GRAVE AND BEYOND.

I SEE.

WELL, I'M SORRY I WASTED YOUR TIME.

DAUGHTER?

HE DID KILL HIS OWN SON.

TO BE CONTINUED

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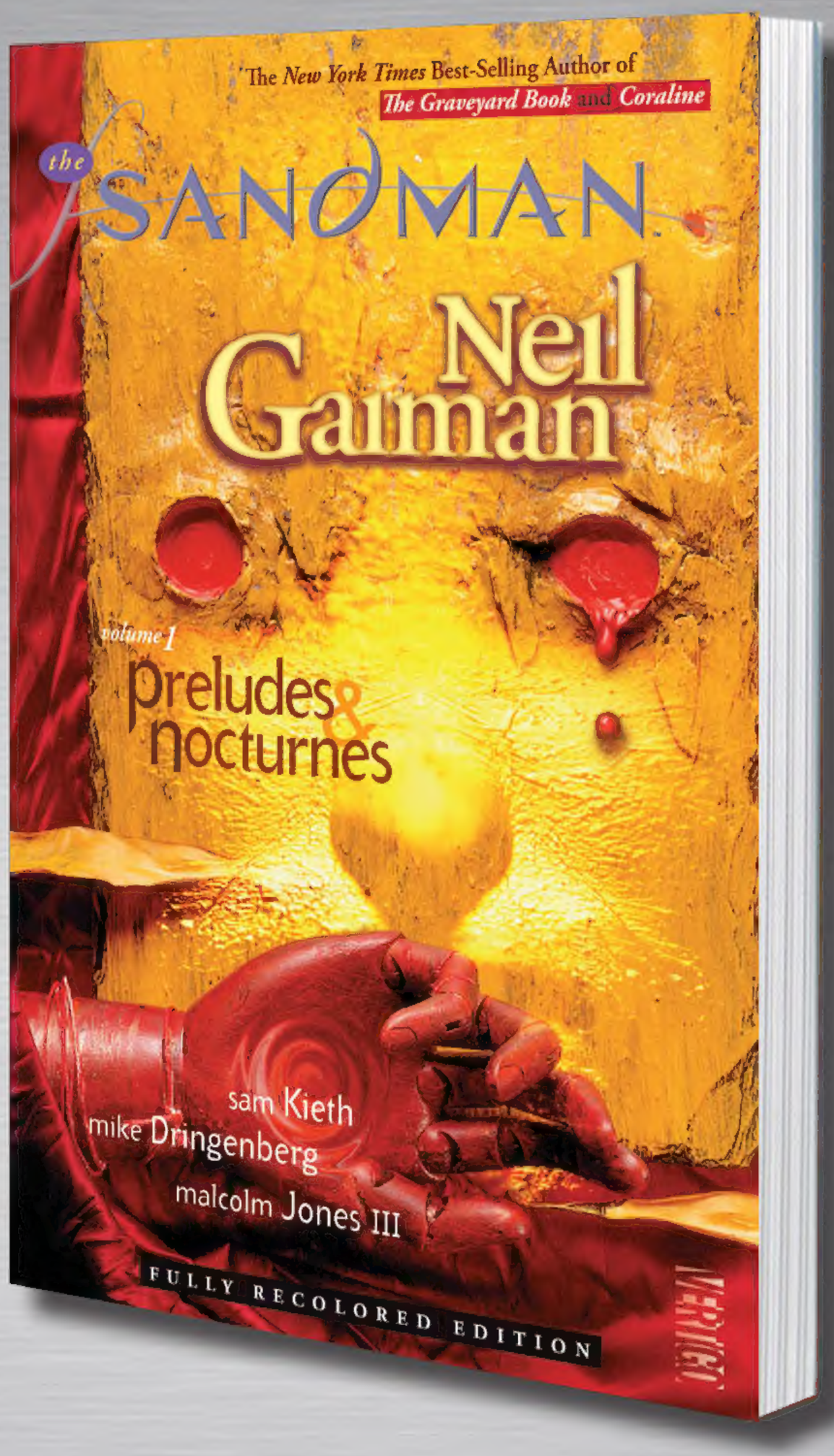
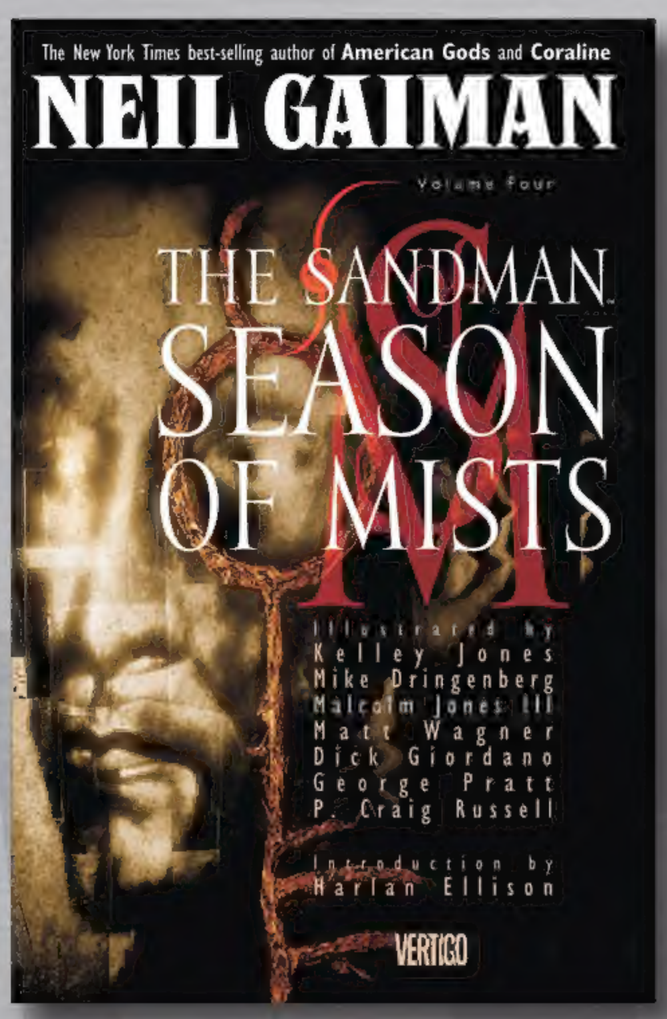


THE SANDMAN VOL. 4:
SEASON OF MISTS



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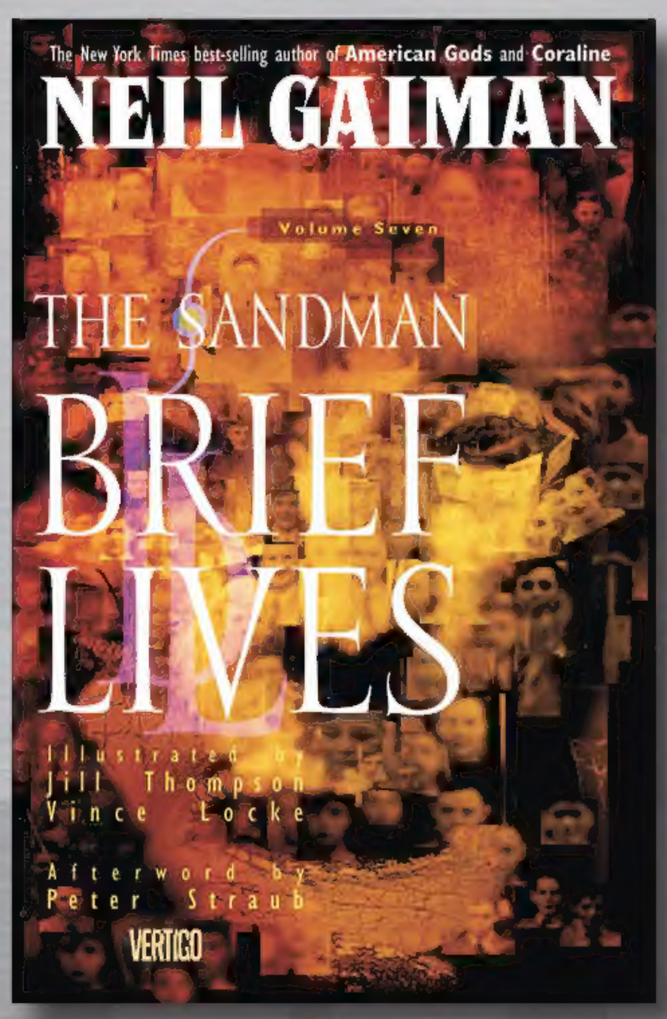
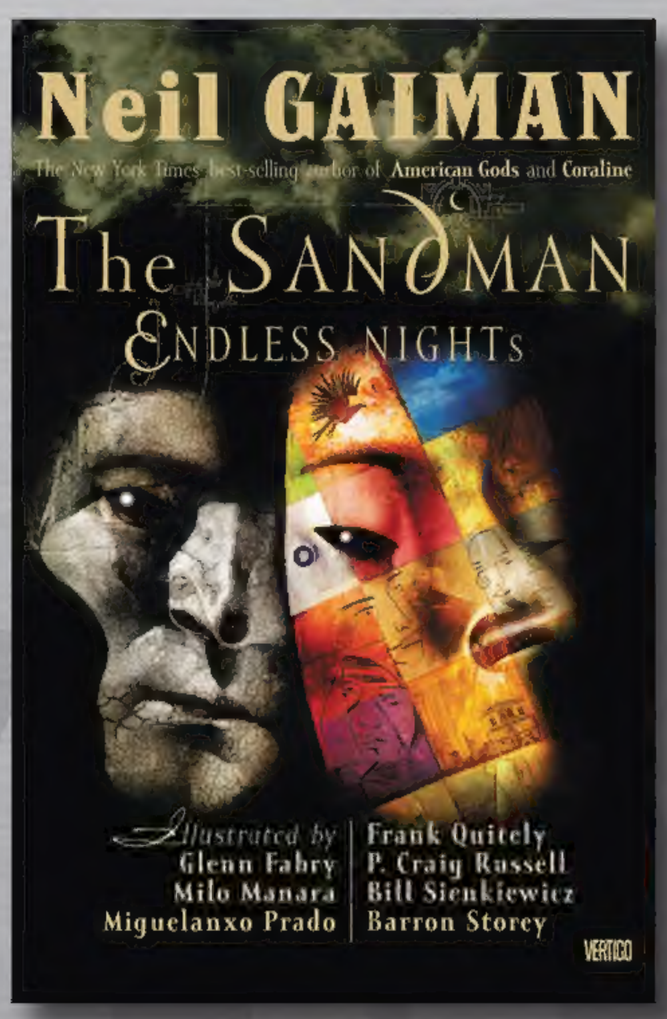
BRIEF LIVES



THE SANDMAN:
ENDLESS NIGHTS



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